ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME 7/14/65	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.	DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW
ED000348	7082	N.A.	

4. AUTHOR(S):
Wickman, Peter M.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED:
The Achievement of Critical Thinking in a History of Civilization Course at Greenville College

6. PUBLICATION TITLE:
N A.

7. EDITOR(S):
N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. Greenville College
ST. Greenville, Illinois
CITY, STATE
TELE. EXT.
INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
Greenville College

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	60	3

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED YES ☐ NO ☒

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR abstract of doctoral dissertation
experimental study

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

abstracts R-01	teaching meths. Y-25		
curriculum R-53	experimental studies G-23	students Y-15	
history S-09	achievement R-04	learning O-03	

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Abstract of study to show how college freshmen can learn to think critically through proper organization of learning experiences in a history of civilization course. Comparisons were made of achievements of students in three different learning situations. Results showed that in the objective of critical thinking, the group which achieved to the greatest extent emphasized: Students motivation, application of historical understandings to contemporary problems, practice in desired behaviors, time to think, continuity and sequence in learning, small discussion groups, variety of experiences, and reciprocal nature of the learning factor.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OR PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

IV-5-Hse (Social Studies) IV-5 (Social Studies)

The Achievement of Critical Thinking in a History of Civilization Course at Greenville College

The general purpose of this study is to show how, through the proper organization of learning experiences in the History of Civilization, college freshmen can be taught methods of historical analysis and in the process make significant achievement in the general education objective of critical thinking.

In Chapter I, the writer discusses the importance of this objective in our society and suggests that the critical thinking skills can be used as an integrating principle in such a course.

In the second chapter, an ideal-type construct was adapted whereby it was possible to identify three ideal positions on the learning continuum. These included the ineffective organization of learning experiences, represented by the "A" position, those freshman history students in 1957-1958; the minimum effective organization of learning experiences, the "B" position, represented by the control group of students in the History of Civilization course; and the most effective organization of learning experiences for the attainment of the objective, the "C" position represented by the experimental group of students in this class.

The "B" position on this learning continuum stressed student motivation, application of historical understandings to contemporary problems, practice in the desired behaviors, sufficient time to think and continuity and sequence in learning. The "C" situation emphasized these criteria plus the use of small discussion groups, variety of experiences and the reciprocal nature of the learning factor. However, it wa assumed that these eight characteristics

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were absent from the "A" situation. An organisational scheme stressing the integrative concepts, skills and values of critical thinking was applied to both the "B" and "C" groups in an attempt to maximize the attainment of this objective.

In Chapter III the writer applied this ideal-type construct to these three classroom situations at Greenville College. This necessitated a description of the distinctive methods used with each learning situation. A variety of sources were used to depict the uniqueness of these groups, including observations of the instructor from his daily anecdotal record, course outlines, the variety of tests used, student responses on a curriculum evaluation study, student-teacher evaluation questionnaire, participation in class, and out-of-classroom activities, and the organization and selection of the total experiences within the various learning circumstances.

Results gained by the three groups were discussed in Chapter IV. Students in the three learning situations, identified by the various criteria, were given pre- and post-tests in the "Test of Critical Thinking Form C." The "B" and "C" groups were given pre- and post-tests on the S.T.E.P. Social Studies Test 1A.

Data from these tests suggested that the "B" group achieved more than the "A" group and that the "C" group had achieved to a greater extent than the "B" group in the objective of critical thinking.

It was concluded that greater gains in critical thinking

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were made by the "C" group on the basis of observations made by the instructor, the testimony of students, grades on unit and final examinations, responses on teacher evaluation sheets, curriculum evaluation questionnaires, and improvement in attitudes as shown on pre- and post-test results of the Inventory of Beliefs.

These favorable results lend credence to the basic contention of this study, which was that maximum achievement in critical thinking could be attained in a course such as History of Civilization, if the learning experiences are selected and organized so as to effect the "C" criteria.

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